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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 003670

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TAGS: PGOV SF
SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE MAKEOVER

REF: CAPE TOWN 0240

PRETORIA 00003670 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Catherine Kay. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. Paul Boughey, Chief of Staff in the Office of the Leader of the Opposition, described to PolOffs on 26 September the Democratic Alliance's (DA) goals leading up to South Africa's national parliamentary elections in 2009: counter the party's whites-only image, modernize party structures, and win control of the Western Cape. While Boughey has no illusions that the DA could overtake the ANC in 2009, he and his party, under the leadership of Helen Zille, appear to be preparing for what they believe will be the eventual end of the ANC's overwhelming dominance. END SUMMARY.

COUNTERING THEIR WHITES-ONLY IMAGE

¶12. (C) On 26 September, Paul Boughey, Chief of Staff in the Office of the Leader of the Opposition, talked to PolOffs about the DA's strategy over the next 18 months to strengthen their position going into the country's national parliamentary elections in 2009. Boughey admitted that the DA's biggest challenge is transforming its image as a "whites-only party," despite the fact that Boughey says most of their ground support is actually coloured. According to Boughey, the DA received 2.5 percent of the black vote in the 2004 parliamentary elections. While not significant, Boughey argued that if they could double that figure, they would gain four or five extra seats in the 400-seat National Assembly. In order to attract black voters, the DA intends to capitalize on disillusionment among blacks and youth by telling them that "the ANC only cares about a few black people, whereas we care about everyone and their issues." The DA is also committed to placing more blacks into leadership positions. Even Boughey admitted that today, blacks hold only a handful of DA leadership positions and as part of their image makeover, they know they will need more black leaders.

¶13. (C) The DA has done its homework and feels it has "great potential" in Limpopo, northeast KwaZulu-Natal, and Gauteng. Though Boughey refused to elaborate on details, he said their research has shown that in these areas, the ANC is the majority's first choice and the DA comes in second "if conditions were right." The DA hopes to capitalize on this second-best rating by attracting not only new black voters but halting Indians from their continual slide away from the

DA, according to Boughey.

BUILDING PARTY INSTITUTIONS

¶4. (C) The DA is also planning on setting up "genuine, modern party structures." Boughey said they would focus in on those geographic areas with the most potential for growth since their funding is limited. Boughey intimated that their current political architecture is unevenly developed, funded, and active. They are also in the process of developing a "leadership academy" for younger leaders, especially blacks aged 18-35 years old.

WIN CONTROL OF WESTERN CAPE

¶5. (C) The DA is also intent on winning control of the Western Cape province in 2009, which Boughey believes is a strong possibility. Boughey said the DA won 45 percent of the vote in the 2006 municipal elections. Building on their experience governing Cape Town municipality through a multi-party coalition, Boughey said the DA will also govern the province through a coalition if they have to, but prefer to win outright. If they had to build a coalition, they would choose to work with the Independent Democrats, the United Democratic Movement, or the Pan African Congress. Boughey said without irony they have no interest in working with "stupid parties like the Freedom Front Plus, which should be eliminated since they only take our potential members away." (NOTE: The Freedom Front Plus is a conservative party devoted to protecting Afrikaner rights and heritage that received 0.89 percent of votes (139,465) in the 2004 election. END NOTE)

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COMMENT

¶6. (C) The DA obviously realizes that it cannot survive, or at a minimum be influential, as long as it is viewed as an all-white party. It may, however, be underestimating the uphill battle it has in stealing voters away from the ANC. The DA's tactical maneuvers like broadening and strengthening party institutions to seek and absorb new members are legitimate, but will not bear fruit unless they can seek and convince voters that DA membership offers greater benefits than ANC membership. The DA needs a broad platform that resonates with black voters, and most importantly, the ability to convince voters they can implement it. Zille's recent anti-drug crusade in the Cape Flats (reftel) -- more specifically her willingness to march side-by-side with community members to advance a cause that is important to them -- is a step in the right direction, but is unlikely alone to translate into nation-wide appeal.

Teitelbaum